

THE PLEASURES OF A SINGLE LIFE, OR THE MISERIES OF MATRIMONY

Occasionally Writ

Upon the many DIVORCES lately Granted by Parliament

Wedlock, Oh! Curst'd uncomfortable State,
Cause of my Woes, and Object of my hate.
How blest'd was I? Ah, once how happy me!

When I from thy uneasy Bonds was free,
How calm my Joys? How peaceful was my Breast,
Till with thy fatal Cares too soon oppress'd,
The World seem'd Paradise, so blest'd the Soil
Wherein I liv'd, that Business was no toil;
Life was a comfort, which produc'd each day
New Joys, that still preserv'd me from decay.
Thus Heav'n first launch'd me 'nto pacifick Seas,
Where free from Storms I mov'd with gentle breeze;
My Sails proportion'd, and my Vessel tite,
Coasting in Pleasure's Bay I steer'd aright,
Ballac'd with true Content, and fraught with Delight.

Books my Companions were, wherein I found
Needful Advice, without a noisy Sound,
But was with friendly, pleasing Silence taught,
Wisdoms best Rules, to fructify my Thought.
Rais'd up our Sage Fore-fathers from the dead,
And when I pleas'd invok'd 'em to my Aid,
Who at my Study-Bar without a Fee would plead;
Whilst I Chief Justice sat heard all their Sutes,
And gave my Judgment on their learn'd Disputes;
Strove to determine ev'ry Cause aright,
And for my pains found Profit and Delight.
Free from Partisney, I fear'd no Blame
Deserv'd no Brib'ry, and deserv'd no Shame.
But like an upright Judge grutch'd no Expence
Of time, to fathom Truth with diligence,
Leading by Day, Contemplating by Night
All Conscience told me that I liv'd

Then to my Paper World I'd have recourse,
And by my Maps run o'er the Universe;
Sail round the Globe and touch at every Port,
Survey those Shoars where Men untam'd resort,
View the old Regions where the *Persian* Lord,
Taught Wooden Deities first to be Ador'd,
Enslav'd at last to Sacrifice his Life,
To the base Pride of an Adult'rous Wife,
And where the *Grecian* Youth to Arms inur'd,
The hungry Soil with *Persian* Blood manur'd,
Where bold *Buceph'lus* brava Conduct show'd,
The force of monstrous Elephants withstood,
And with his Rider waded thro' a purple Flood.

Then would I next the *Roman* Fields survey,
Where brave *Fabritius* with his Army lay;
Fam'd for his Valour, from Corruption free,
Made up of Courage and Humility.
That when Encamp'd the Goodman lowly bent,
Cook'd his own Cabbage in his homely Tent;
And when the *Samaites* sent a Golden Surber,
To tempt him to betray his Country *Rome*,
The Dross he scoffingly return'd unroll'd,
And Answer'd with a Look serenely bold,
That *Roman* Sprouts would boil without their *Grecian* Gold.
Then eat his Cale-worts for his Meal design'd,
And beat the *Grecian* Army when he'd din'd.

Thus would I range world Pole to Pole,
To increase my Knowledge, and delight my Soul;
Travel all Nations, and inform my Sense,
With ease and safety, at a small Expence.
No Stomach to please, no Money to pay,
No House to keep, no Child to show the way;

(2)

No *Alpes* to climb, no Deserts here to pass,
No *ambuscades*, no Thieves to give me Chase;
No Bear to dread, or ravenous Wolf to fight,
No Flies to sting, no Rattle Snakes to bite;
No Floods to ford, no Hurricans to fear,
No dreadful Thunder to surprize the Ear:
No Winds to freeze, no Sun to scorch or fry,
No Thrift, or Hunger, and Relief not nigh,
All these Fatigues and Mischiefs could I shun;
Rest when I pleas'd, and when I pleas'd Jog on,
And Travel thro' both *Indies* in an Afternoon.

When the Day thus far pleasingly was spent,
And every Hour administer'd Content,
Then would I range the Fields, and flowry Meads,
Where Nature her exuberant Bounty spreads,
In whose delightful Products does appear,
Inimitable Beauty ev'ry where;
Contemplate on each Plant, and useful Weed,
And how its form first lay involv'd in Seed,
How they're preserv'd by Providential Care
For what desig'd, and what their Vertues are.
Thus to my Mind by dint of Reason prove,
That all below is Ow'd to Heaven above,
And that no Earthly Temporals can be,
But what must Center in Eternitie,
Then gaze aloft whence all things had their Birth
And play my prying Soul 'twixt Heaven and Earth,
Thus the sweet Harmony oth' whole admire
And by due search new Learning still acquire,
So nearer ev'ry day to Truths divine aspire.

When tir'd with Thought then from my Pocket pluck,
Some Friendly dear Companion of a Book,
Whose homely Colves-Skin fences shall contain
The Verbal Treasure of some Old Good Man:

Made by long study and Experience wise,
Whose piercing Thoughts to Heav'nly knowledge rise,
Amongst whose Pious Reliques I could find
Rules for my Life, Rich Bankquers for my mind,
Such pleasing Nectar, such Eternal food,
That well digested makes a Man a God,
And for his use at the same time prepares,
On Earth a Heav'n in spite of worldly Cares.
The day in these Enjoyments would I spend,
But chuse at night my Bottle and my Friend,
Took prudent Care that neither were abus'd
But with due moderation both I us'd.

And in one sober Pint found more delight,
Than the insatiate Sor that swills all Night;
Ne'er drown my Sences, or my Soul debase,
Or drink beyond the relish of my Glass,
For in excess good Heav'n's design is Cross,
In all extremes the true enjoyments lost:
Wine cheers the Heart, and elevates the Soul,
But if we surfeit with too large a Bowl,

Waiting true Aim we th' happy Mark o'er shoot,
And change the heav'nly Image to a Brute.

So the great *Grecians* who the World subdu'd,
And drown'd whole Nations in a Sea of Blood,
At last was Conquer'd by the power of Wine,
And dy'd a Drunken Victim to the Vine.

My Friend, and I, when o'er our Bottle sat,
Mix'd with each Glass some inoffensive Chat,
Talk'd of the World's Affaires, but still kept free
From Passion, Zeal, or Partialitie;
With honest freedom did our thoughts dispense,
And judg'd of all things with indifference:
Till time at last did our delights invade,
And in due season Separation made.

Then without Envy, Discord or Deceit,
Part like true Friends as loving as we meet,
The Tavern change to a Domestick Scene,
That sweet Retirement tho' it's ne'er so mean.
Thus leave each other in a cheerful Plight,
To enjoy the silent Pleasures of the Night.
When home return'd my thanks to Heaven pay,
For all the past kind Blessing of the Day;
No haughty Helpmate to my Peace molest,
No treacherous Snake to harbour in my Breast;
No Fawning Mistress of the Female Art,
With *Judas* Kisses to betray my heart;
No light tail'd Hypocrite to raise my Fears;
No Vile Impert'nence to torment my Ears;
No motled Off-spring to disturb my Thought,
In Wedlock born but G-d knows where begot;
No lustful *Massalina* to require
Whole Troops of Men to feed her Brutal Fire;
No Family cares my quiet to disturb;
No head-strong Humours to assuage, or Curb;
No Jaring Servants, no Domestick Strife,
No Jilt, no Termagent, no faithless Wife,
With Vinegar, or Gall, to sow or bitter Life.

Thus freed from all that could my mind annoy
Alone my self, I did my self enjoy:

When Nature call'd I laid me down to rest,
With a Sound Body, and a Peaceful Breast;
Hours of repose with constancy I kept,
And Guardian Angels watch'd me as I slept,
In lively Dreams reviving as I lay,
The Pleasures of the last precedent day:
Thus whilst I single liv'd did I possess,
By day and night incessant happiness,
Content enjoy'd awak'd, and Sleeping found no less.

But the curs'd Fiend from Hell's dire Regions sent,
Ranging the World to Man's destruction bent
Who with an Envious pride deholding me,
Advanc'd by Vertue to felicitie,
Resolv'd his own Eternal wretched State
Should be in part reveng'd by my sad Fate;
And to at once my happy life betray,
Flung Woman, faithless Woman, in my Way:
Beauty she had, a seeming modest Mein.
All Charms without, but Devil all within,
Which did not yet appear, but lurk'd, alas, unseen
A fair Complexion far exceeding Paint,
Black sleeping Eyes that would have Charm'd a Saint;
Her Lips so soft and sweet that ev'ry kiss,
Seem'd a short Taste of the Eternal Bliss;
Her set of Teeth so Regular and white,
They'd show their Lustre in the darkest night;

Round her Seraphick Face so fair and young,
 Her Sable Hair in careless Tresses hung,
 Which added to her Beatus features, shew'd,
 Like some fair Angel peeping thro' a Cloud?
 Her Breasts, her Hands, and every Charm so bright,
 She seem'd a Sun by Day, a Moon by Night;
 Her Shape so ravishing that ev'ry part,
 Proportion'd was to th' nicest Rules of Art;
 So awful was her Carriage when she mov'd,
 None could behold her but he fear'd and lov'd,
 She Danc'd, well Sung, well finely play'd the Lute,
 Was always Witty in her Words, or Mute;
 Obliging not reserv'd, nor yet too free,
 But as a Maid divinely bless'd should be;
 Not vainly gay, but decent in Attire,
 She seem'd so Good, she could no more acquire
 Of Heaven, no more than what she had, and Man no more desire:
 Fortune, like God and Nature too, was kind,
 And to these Gifts a copious Sum had joyn'd.
 Who could the Power of such Temptations shun,
 What frozen *Linick* from her Charms could run;
 What Cloister'd Monk could see a Face so bright,
 But quit his beads, and follow Beauty's light,
 And by its Lustre hope to shun Eternal Night.
 I so bewitch'd, and poyson'd with her Charms,
 Believ'd the utmost Heaven was in her Arms,
 Methoughts the goodness in her Eyes I see,
 I Spoke her the Offspring of some Dietie.
 Now Books or Walks would no content afford,
 She was the only Good to beador'd,
 In her fair looks alone delight I found,
 Loves raging Storms all other joys had drown'd.
 By Beauty's *Ignis Fatuus* led astray,
 Bound for content I lost my happy way
 Of Reasons faithful Pilot now bereft,
 Was amongst Rocks and Shoals in danger left.
 There must have perish'd, as I fondly thought,
 Lest her kind Usage my Salvation wrought;
 Her happy aid I labour'd to obtain,
 Hop'd for success yet fear'd her sad disdain.
 Tortur'd like dying Convicts whilst they live,
 Twixt fear of Death, and hopes of a Reprieve.
 First for her smallest Favours did I sue,
 Crept, Fawn'd and Cring'd as Lovers us'd to do?
 Sigh'd e'er I spoke, and when I Spoke look'd pale,
 In words confus'd disclos'd my mournful Tale?
 Unpractis'd in Amour's fine Speeches cou'd,
 But could not utter what I well design'd.
 And by her Charms gainst bashfulness I strove,
 And trembling far, and stammer'd out my Love;
 Told her how greatly I admir'd and fear'd,
 Which she twixt Coyne's and compassion heard,
 Grutch'd no expence of Money, or of Time,
 And thought that not to adore her was a Crime;
 The more each Visit I acquainted grew,
 Yet every time found something in her new.
 Who was above her Sex so fortunate,
 He had a Charm for Man in every state;
 Duty for th' Youthful, Prudence for the Old,
 Pity for the Godly, for the Miser Gold.

(3)
 Wit for th' Ingenious, silence for the Grave,
 Flatt'ry for th' Fool, and Conning for the Knave;
 Compounded thus of such Varieties,
 She had a Knack to every Temper please,
 And as her self thought fit was every one of these.
 I lov'd, I sigh'd and vow'd, talk'd, whin'd and pray'd,
 And at her Feet my panting heart I lay'd;
 She smil'd, then frown'd, was now reserv'd, then free,
 And as she paid her part off chang'd her Key;
 Not thro' fantastick Humour but design,
 To try me throly e'er she would be mine,
 Because she wanted in one Man to have
 A Husband, Lover, Cuckold and a slave.
 So Travellers before a Horse they buy,
 His Speed, his Paces, and his Temper try,
 Whether he'll answer Whip and Spur, thence Judge,
 If the poor Beast will prove a patient Dudge,
 When she by Wiles had heighten'd my desire,
 And fam'd Loves sparkles to a raging fire,
 Made now for Wedlock, or for *Bedlam* fit,
 Passion hav'n got the upper hand of Wit,
 The Dame by pitty, or by Interest mov'd,
 Or else by Lust, pretended how she lov'd;
 After long sufferings her Consent I got,
 To make me happy, as I hop'd and thought,
 But Oh, the Wretched hour I ry'd the *Gordian Knot*.
 Thus thro' mistake I rashly plung'd my life,
 Into that Bag of Miseries a Wife.
 With joyful Arms I thus embrac'd my fate,
 Believ'd too soon, was undeceiv'd too late;
 So hair-brain'd Fools to *Indian* Climates rove,
 With a vain hope their Fortunes to improve;
 There spend their slender Cargoes, then become
 Worse slaves abroad than e'er they were at home.
 When a few Weeks were wait'd I compar'd,
 With all due moderation and regard;
 My former freedom; with my new restraint,
 Judging which State afforded most content.
 But found a Single Lift as calm and gay,
 As the delightful Month of Blooming *May*,
 Not chill'd with cold, nor scorch'd with too much heat,
 Not Plung'd with too much dust, nor drown'd with Wet,
 But pleasing to the Eyes, and to the Nostrils sweet,
 But Wedlock's like the Blustering Month of *March*,
 That does the Body's Maims and Bruises search,
 Brings by Cold nipping Storms unwelcome pains,
 And finds, or Breeds, Distempers in our Veins;
 Renew old Sores, and hastens on decay,
 And seldom does afford one pleasant day,
 But Clouds dissolve or raging Tempest blow,
 And untill Houses like a marry'd Shrow;
 Thus *March* and *Marriage* justly may be said,
 To be alike, then sure the Man is Mad,
 That loves such Changing Weather where the best is bad,
 Tho' I once happy in a single Life,
 Yet Shipwrack'd all upon that Rock a Wife,
 By Gold and Beauties Pow'rful Charms betray'd,
 To the dull drudgery of a Marriage bed;
 That Paradise for Fools, a spot of Hell for Wits,
 A Prison for the Wise, and brutal state for Jests.

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(64)

Then Nauseous Priests, craft that too soon appear'd,
Not as I hop'd but worse than what I fear'd.
All her soft Charms which I believ'd divine,
Marriage I thought had made them only mine;
Vain hope, alas, for I too early found,
My Brows were with the Thorns of *Widlock* crown'd.
Jealousies first from Reason rais'd a doubt,
And fatal Chance th' unhappy Truth brought out;
Made it so plain from all Pretences free'd,
That wicked Woman no Excuse could plead;
And if she wants device to hide her shame,
Hell can no Umbrage for Adultry frame.

I thought it prudence the Disgrace to hide,
Tho' rav'd and storm'd, the Pardon beg'd and Cry'd,
Yet with false Protections strove to Charm,
The Cuckold to believe she'd done no harm.
Tho' taken by surprize (O curse the day)
Where all the Marks of past-Enjoyment lay,
And she disorder'd by her lustful freaks,
Had shame and horror struggling in her Checks;
Yet made Essays to clear her Innocence,
And hide her Guilt with Lyes and Impudence;
For lustful Women like a vicious State,
Oft stifle Ills by others full as great.
But I convinc'd too plainly of her Guilt,
All her false Oaths and quick Inventions spoil,
Which when she'd us'd in vain the blush'd and Cry'd,
And own'd her fault she found she could not hide.

This I forgave, she promis'd to reclaim,
Vow'd future truth if I'd conceal the shame;
But what Strange Adamantine Chain can bind,
Woman Corrupted to be just or kind;
Or how can Man to an Adulteress show
That Love, which to a faithful Wife is due.
I struggl'd hard, and all my Passions checkt,
And chang'd Revenge into a Mild Respect,
That Good for Ill return'd might touch her near,
And Gratitude might bind her more than fear;
My former Love I ev'ry day renew'd,
And all the signals of Oblivion shew'd:
Wink'd at small faults would no such Trifles mind,
As accidental Failings not design'd.

I all things to her Temper easie made,
Scorn'd to reflect, and hared to upbraid;
She chose (and rich it was) her own Attire,
Nah, had what a proud Woman could desire.

Thus the new Covenant I strictly kept,
And of in private for her Failings wept,
Yet both with seeming Chearfulness those cares,
That bring a Man too soon to drilled hairs.

But all this kindness I dispens'd in vain,
Where Lust and base Ingratitude remain.

Lust, which if once in Female fancy fix'd,
Burns like Salt-petre with dry Touchwood mix'd:

And tho' cold fear for time may stop its force,
'Twill soon like fire confin'd break out the worse;
Or like a Tide obstructed reassume its course.

No Art cou'd e'er perfume the stinking *State*,
Or change the lecherous Nature of the *State*.
No Skillful Whistler ever found the slight,
To wash or bleach an *Ethiopian* white.
No gentle Usage truly will Assuage,
A *Tyger's* fierceness, or a *Lion's* rage.
Stripes and severe Correction is the way,
When once they're thro'ly Conquer'd they'll obey.
'Tis Whip and Spur, Commanding Rein and Bit,
That makes the unruly head-strong Horse submit.
So stubborn faithless Woman must be us'd,
Or Man by Woman basely be abus'd.

For after all th' endearments I could show,
At last the turn'd both Libertine and Shrow;
From my Submission grew perverse and proud,
Crabbed as Varg's, and as Thunder loud;
Did what she pleas'd, would no Obedience own,
And ridicul'd the patience I had shown.
Fear'd no sharp threatnings, valued no disgrace,
But sung the Wrongs she'd done me in my face.
Grew still more head-strong turbulent and bold,
Filling my Mansion with a squalid Brood.
Thus Brutal Lust her humane Reason drown'd,
And her loose Tail oblig'd the Country round;
Advice, Reproof, Pray'rs, Tears, were flung away,
For still she grew more wicked ev'ry day;
Till by her equals scorn'd, my Servants led
The Brutal Rage of her adulterous Bed.
Nah, in my absence trucked to my Groom,
And hug'd the servil Traytor in my Room;
When these strange Tidings Thunder-struck my Ear,
And such Inhumane Wrongs were made appear,
On these just Grounds for a Divorce I sued,
At last that head-strong Tyrant Wife subdued,
Cancel'd the Marriage bonds, and Basterdiz'd her Brood.

Woman, thou worst of all Church-Plagues, farewell;
Bad at the Best, but at the worst a Hell;
Thou truss of Worm-wood, bitter Teaz of Life,
Thou Nursery of humane cares a *Wife*.
Thou Apple-Eating Traytor, who began
The Wrath of Heav'n, and miseries of Man;
And ha'st with never-failing diligence,
Improv'd the Curse to human Race e'er since.
Farewel Church-Juggle that enslav'd my Life,
But bless that Pow'r that rid me of my Wife.
And now the Laws once more have set me free,
If Woman can again prevail with me,
My Flesh and Bones shall make my Wedding-Feast,
And none shall be Invited as my Guest,
But my good *Bride*, the *Devil*, and a *Priest*.

F I N I S